

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**PROCEDURE TO MONITOR THE PROCESS
OF INTERNATIONAL HARMONIZATION**

Fourth Annual Report

Adopted by the Committee on 26 June 2002

A. INTRODUCTION

1. At its meeting of 15-16 October 1997, the SPS Committee adopted a provisional procedure to monitor the process of international harmonization and the use of international standards, guidelines or recommendations, as provided for in Articles 3.5 and 12.4 of the SPS Agreement.¹ At its July 1999 meeting, the Committee decided to extend the provisional monitoring procedure and review its operation by July 2001.² In July 2001, the Committee agreed to further extend the provisional procedure for 24 months, and to review its operation in July 2003 to determine at that time whether to continue with the provisional procedure, amend it, or develop another one.³

2. At its meeting of 7-8 July 1999, the Committee adopted the First Annual Report (G/SPS/13). The Second Annual Report was approved ad referendum after the 21-22 June 2000 meeting (G/SPS/16), and the Third Annual Report was approved ad referendum after the 10-11 July 2001 meeting (G/SPS/18). These reports summarized several standards-related issues that the Committee had considered and the responses received from the relevant standard-setting organizations.

B. NEW ISSUE

3. One new issue has been raised since the adoption of the Third Annual Report. At the 31 October-1 November 2001 Committee meeting, South Africa requested the revision of the OIE standard on African horse sickness.⁴ South Africa indicated that the current chapter in the International Animal Health Code was outdated in terms of the epidemiology of the disease. The required radius around an outbreak for a protection zone and the scientific justification period before an infected zone could be declared free from the disease needed to be re-evaluated. The principles established by the OIE Code Commission for the revision of the Code Chapter on Bluetongue needed to be taken into account in a new approach to the chapter on African horse sickness. The Code should also make provision for low and high seasonal incidence or freedom from disease to coincide with the approach taken in the case of other seasonal vector-borne diseases such as Bluetongue. South Africa noted that the outdated scientific justification for the international standard could be perceived as an impediment to international trade in equines.

¹ G/SPS/11.

² G/SPS/14.

³ G/SPS/17.

⁴ G/SPS/R/25, paras. 114-115, and G/SPS/GEN/289 refer.

4. At the same meeting, the representative of the OIE indicated that South Africa's request would be submitted to the next OIE Code Committee meeting.⁵ The chapter on horse sickness had been revised at the beginning of the 1990s. In view of its expertise on African horse sickness, the representative of the OIE invited South Africa to propose a chapter for the Code. At the 20-21 March 2002 meeting of the SPS Committee, the representative of the OIE reported that the Animal Health Code Commission had begun to examine the group of diseases which relied on insect vectors (such as African horse sickness), but had first concentrated on Bluetongue. A chapter on Bluetongue was almost completed and could be adopted in May 2002, and the development of provisions on African horse sickness was on the work programme of the Code Commission.

C. RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM THE RELEVANT STANDARD-SETTING ORGANIZATIONS

Requirement for control of Infectious Bursal Virus (IBDV) in cooked chicken meat – Response from the OIE

5. At the March 2002 Committee meeting, the OIE provided updated information to the SPS Committee regarding work on IBDV.⁶ The representative of the OIE recalled that OIE does not conduct primary research, but relies on research published by its members to ensure that OIE standards are in line with the latest scientific information. The Code Commission considered IBDV in January 2002, and noted that new information would soon be available. The OIE will establish an expert group to review the new information when it becomes available.

⁵ G/SPS/R/26, para. 118.

⁶ G/SPS/R/26.